

Urban Design to Support Complex Regional Pain Syndrome

In what ways can urban design help deliver

EQUALITY

for those with the non-visible disability of Complex Regional Pain Syndrome?

Project Background

Complex Regional Pain Syndrome is a debilitating condition. Burning Nights, a charity set up to support individuals with CRPS, states that the condition is believed to affect around 15,000 people in the UK. Very little research has been done on the condition, let alone how urban design can impact it.

Non-visible disabilities affect a significant portion of the population, yet they are often overlooked and misunderstood in society. Despite the Equality Act of 2010, public spaces are still not adequately designed for those with disabilities and enhance discomfort for individuals with CRPS on daily journeys.

Method

- Collaboration with charities supporting individuals with CRPS as gatekeepers to recruit participants for questionnaire surveys via sharing the questionnaire on social media, newsletters, and research listings.
- The wording in the questionnaire and interview was chosen to be sensitive and non-offensive, using terms like “differently-abled” instead of “disabled”. Use of “non-visible” instead of “invisible” based on government guidance. Wording avoids triggering pain or discomfort and was pilot tested prior to distribution.
- The questionnaire ensures anonymity and allows participants to skip questions to prevent discomfort, and option for participants to ask for informal interviews for further discussion.
- Data gathered was analysed to identify discomfort factors in journeys and propose recommendations.

Expected Findings

- Pavement gradient, width, surface, resting points.
- Access design not adequate
- Logos with visible disabilities fuel perception on non-visible.
- Poor public space affects opportunities and equality.

“I’m unable to use public transport anymore”

“Smoother pavements”

“Some pavement surfaces cause me too much pain”

“I miss out on days out with my son, I miss out on family days. I want to be able to go exploring with my son”

“Wider pavements, more even ground”

“Maintain the pavement better”



Research Aim

Improve an understanding of what is meant by non-visible disabilities and highlight the occurrence and high percentage of the population that are personally affected by them.

Raise awareness of the non-visible and often misunderstood condition of Complex Regional Pain Syndrome, and how Urban Design can help support equality, opportunity, and wellbeing.

Identify the barriers that prevent or dissuade members of the public from travelling on foot or by public transport, or even from leaving their houses and the consequences that follow from this.

Form recommendations at the final stages of this research and ultimately, form a useful and implementable outcome.

1 Define what is meant by ‘non-visible disability’ to ensure clarity of the term and give a brief overview of Complex Regional Pain Syndrome.

2 Look at how local authorities in Oxford and public transport services are supporting those with non-visible disabilities and ageing population.

3 Assess what hurdles are encountered by people with CRPS on their journeys through a study.

4 Compare these hurdles to those of the ageing population.

5 Determine why these are hurdles and identify the details which cause them to be a problem.

6 Propose a solution to each hurdle where applicable and put forward viable recommendations.



References

- Burning Nights (No Date) ‘Who can ‘get’ CRPS’ Available at: <https://www.burningnightscrps.org/crps/crps-information/who-can-develop-crps/> (Accessed 01/03/2024)
- DPTAC (2020) ‘DPTAC position statement on non-visible disabilities’ Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dptac-position-on-non-visible-disabilities/dptac-position-statement-on-non-visible-disabilities> (Accessed 01/03/2024)



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Please note this project is in progress -
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